

Which online learning platform should you use for your virtual OSHLSP?

Important things to remember when choosing your platform

Some children may not have access to a web camera, so a platform where they can also send a photo or a message with their problems/questions for the tutor to look at is preferable. A platform where this information can be stored in categories and key learning areas, would allow students and tutors to refer to this information later on, if needed.

Ease of access is a key component when using which platform you will use. While Zoom is great for video calls, each time you want to start a call you must individually invite each user, which becomes onerous especially if the students are hard to contact. A platform where the students can be invited once, and then have permanent access is preferable. They can then self-elect to seek support as needed, rather than waiting to be invited to each session.

Online learning platforms – Pros and cons

	Pro's	Con's
Zoom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Excellent call quality - Free versions - Easy to learn and use - Mac and PC compatible - Screen sharing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chat disappears after call has ended - Must set up account - Must add/invite everyone, each time you want to connect - No permanent 'classroom'
Skype	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Excellent call quality - Free versions - Easy to use - Mac and PC compatible - Screen sharing - File sharing - Included in office 365 - Desktop and Mobile 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If calling a phone number this costs money - Must set up account - Must add/invite everyone, each time you want to connect - No permanent 'classroom'
Discord	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A permanent virtual classroom - Voice, video and messaging boards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The server is more complicated than Zoom or Skype

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'Servers' or chat rooms can be created by the users. These can then be broken down into sub-channels (different study areas/topics or age groups) - No need for continual invites. Once they are connected to the platform they have permanent access, even if the teacher isn't online - Free - PC and Mac (Yosemite) - Desktop and Mobile 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Doesn't integrate with outlook or office 365 - You cannot set up 'meetings' with people unless they're on discord as everything happens from within the environment. This may be good with virtual classrooms as it means once a student is added, they can connect easily in the future. - Be aware that you must make your server/channel private so that it is only accessible to your Homework Club.
FaceTime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Intuitive and easy to use - Easy for apple users - Great quality - Free 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not available on android - Phone numbers are required for each person - Must call everyone, each time you want to connect
Google Classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Available on laptop and mobile devices - No limit on how many people can access the program - Linked to Google docs, so you can send out an activity and see directly how everyone is going - User friendly interface 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Doesn't allow access from multiple domains - Cannot log in using personal Gmail account, must use Google Apps for Education - Difficult for students to share their work with their peers - Impersonal. No option for interaction between any of the student users. - Interactions between teacher and learners is only possible through Google Docs.
Google Hangouts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Simple and easy to use - Does not require a phone number - Free 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Video calls in big groups can be of bad sound/visual quality

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Must add/invite everyone, each time you want to connect - Does not offer file sharing or screen sharing - Is just a basic video calling service
Blackboard Collaborate Ultra	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Virtual Classroom - Video conferencing - File sharing - Virtual interactive whiteboard - PowerPoint during videos - Opens in web browser so no need for download of application - Breakout video chats monitored by the teacher - Students can interact with content on the screen - Supports smartphones and tablets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This is not a free platform - Requires link access to each session - Does not have a permanent classroom. Feeds of information cannot be saved - More complex to learn than some of the other platforms

Creating a child-safe virtual OSHLSP

Just a few points to keep in mind as you take your Homework Club online

- Ensure you are using your professional email address. Focus on maintaining privacy, personal information, and keeping professional boundaries.
- Create of a Code of Online Conduct both for tutors and for students, discuss and have each person sign before being inducted into your virtual classroom.
- Setting boundaries and rules for use of the Virtual Classroom.
- With tutors/volunteers/staff around expected behaviours and interactions with students in this space
- With students around respectful language and behaviours while using the space. Discussions about Cyber safety.